

## **CHARACTER NOTES**

### ***GILBERT***

#### **ADJECTIVES**

- Confused
- Protective
- Selfless
- Shy
- Angry
- Frustrated
- Insecure
- Lonely
- Old-fashioned
- Emotionally cold / shut-off
- Distant /reserved
- “Black and white” / “All or Nothing”
- Caring (for Arnie)
- Mysterious
- Ashamed
- Fed Up

#### **CONFLICTS**

1. He loves his “Momma” but is also embarrassed of her.  
He makes fun of her to his friends.
  - EVIDENCE: “Have you ever seen a beached whale?  
Well, that’s her.” – dialogue to Becky

- EVIDENCE – held little kid to window so he could see her
- 2. Fights with Ellen. She is ashamed of Arnie and Gilbert is his ‘protector’ so they don’t see eye-to-eye.
  - He overcomes this conflict when she throws a baked potato through the window to stop kids staring at Momma. He gives her a half-smile which suggests he has gained new respect for her.

### **3. Conflicted between doing the right thing for his family and doing something for himself / responsibilities VS freedom / self VS family**

- EVIDENCE – In charge of bathing Arnie but shirks his responsibilities in favour of spending time with Becky. As a result, Arnie stays in the bath all night and has a “scare with water”
- EVIDENCE – Wants to leave Endora (panned into long shot of him driving past Endora sign) but feels tied to his family responsibilities.
- EVIDENCE – his affair with Betty Carver feels right for him, but it means he is allowing her to commit adultery

### **4. Conflict within himself**

- Says “Nobody hurts Arnie” and later physically assaults him, saying “I hit him so hard” to Becky.

- Wants to leave Endora but tied to family (repeated info)

### HOW DOES GILBERT RESOLVE THIS CONFLICT?

- Finds a way in the end to have both – him and Arnie eventually leave Endora with Becky. He is still responsible for Arnie but he is free to leave his hometown (after Momma's death).
- Becky – see later character notes.

### HOW DOES GILBERT CHANGE?

- He learns to 'let people in' such as Becky. He opens up more – EVIDENCE – he talks to Becky at the end about his dad being emotionless, saying "It was like he was already dead". Becky smiles and answers "I used to know a guy like that", hinting that Gilbert has learnt to express himself better.
- He changes in how he views his family – at the start of the film he sees them as a dysfunctional family. His momma seems like a burden. This changes to a more respectful view. EVIDENCE: dialogue "I'm not gonna let her be a joke" – won't allow a crane to remove her from building.
- His self-image changes from someone who is stuck and trapped, working the same job, doing the same things, sleeping with the same married woman, to someone that can "go anywhere". Remember to contrast the three quotes "I gotta go" / "I got nowhere to go" / "We

can go anywhere, if we want.” He also forgives himself for hitting Arnie.

- The catalyst for this change is Becky – more notes to come.

## SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS

- Becky – She allows him to open up and find his own freedom.
- Mrs Carver – represents his trapped old life. She represented temptation. She said she’d chosen him because “I knew you’d never leave”. She later refers to him as “Poor Gilbert, cooped up...”
- Momma – significant because they both gain respect for each other – it’s mutual. Their relationship changes from one of resentment to one of mutual respect. He is no longer ashamed of her.
- Arnie – Even though he loves him, Arnie is something of a burden to Gilbert. He’s the person Gilbert cares about the most but ironically ends up hurting. Described as an ‘anchor’ to the family and Endora.

## VISUAL / VERBAL TECHNIQUES THAT WE COULD MENTION:

- Dialogue. What others say about him, what he says to others, and his narration (what he says to himself / to us). We’ve got intimate access to his thoughts through his narration. This allows us to see things as he sees them.
- Narration (see above)

- Close up as he drove out of Endora showing his shame / confusion / resentment of self / loneliness
- Low angle shot at end of him and Arnie as they prepare to leave Endora
- Lighting: shadowy / gloomy in parts – he often hid in shadows (when waiting to talk to Becky for example) – suggesting he's unsure / not willing to 'open up' / hanging back

## CHARACTER NOTES: BECKY

### ADJECTIVES:

#### **1. Passionate**

- Passionate about life. She can make the most out of any situation, including being in Endora. She takes time to watch the sunset. She appreciates natural beauty – the little things in life.

#### **2. Independent**

- She does things for herself – she doesn't rely on others for her own happiness (unlike Gilbert). She is prepared to watch the sunset alone if need be.
- Happy being on her own

#### **3. Wilful / persistent / headstrong**

- Persists with Gilbert showing his feelings. An example of this is at the lake when she persuades G to come in, and later when she makes him tell acknowledge that he puts others first.

#### **4. Carefree**

- Travels round a lot – comfortable with living out of a caravan.
- Doesn't care for appearances – "I'm not into that whole external beauty thing, you know..."
- Nothing bugs her

#### **5. Accepting**

- Does not judge other people – Arnie, Gilbert or Momma.
- She didn't judge Gilbert for his rendezvous with Betty Carver.
- When Momma says "I haven't always been like this", Becky replies with the same line, making Momma laugh.

#### **6. Spiritual**

- Into natural beauty – beauty of landscape, sunsets etc
- She believes that's what's on the inside counts more

#### **7. Happy**

- Content with simple things in life
- Always makes the best of situations

#### **8. Down to Earth / calm**

- Shows appreciation of natural world.
- Smart, mostly practical – can come up with solutions

#### **9. Caring**

- Makes an effort to get to know Gilbert's feelings
- Looks after Arnie

#### **10. Maverick**

- Follows her own belief systems / rules

#### **11. Optimistic**

- Sees the good in people
- When Gilbert is upset she tells him “He’ll (Arnie) be okay”

## **12. Deep / not superficial**

- Believes in inner beauty
- Doesn’t mind Arnie is retarded or that Momma is overweight

## **SHE IS A CATALYST FOR CHANGE**

### **CHARACTER NOTES: MOMMA**

#### **1. She is self-conscious.**

- She hasn’t left the house in seven years
- She sees herself as a burden – dialogue “I know what a burden I am”
- Because of her horrific experience at the police station, Momma refuses to go outside for Arnie’s birthday party, instead watching from behind the curtains.

#### **2. She is caring**

- She always refers to Arnie as “my sunshine”
- She wanted to ensure Arnie’s 18<sup>th</sup> birthday party was special
- She left the house for the first time in seven years to get her boy

### **3. She is oblivious to the fact that the pressure is on Gilbert**

- “Where is your head lately Gilbert?”
- “You gotta do better”
- This changed when she acknowledged that she was a burden.
- She later refers to Gilbert as her “knight in shimmering armour” – showing that her opinion has changed somewhat.

### **4. She hasn't moved on from her husband's death**

- She loses her cool when Arnie begins to chant “Dad's dead” over and over at the dinner table
- She has hardly moved off the couch in years
- She eats to deal with her grief – Gilbert tells us that “she used to be the prettiest girl in these parts”

### **5. She finds courage in the film**

- Refer to notes about her leaving house to get Arnie – remember LOW ANGLE SHOT of her on porch surrounded by daughters
- She climbs the stairs at the end of the film for the first time in a long while – Long shot of her walking up stairs close ups of hand on rail and face, struggling

### **6. She is long-suffering**

- At the end of the film the fire represents purification of the whole situation
- Her child Amy remarks on the fact that “she's so beautiful” – she thus finds redemption in the end.